

UGANDA MARTYRS ESSAY COMPETITION LAUNCHED

PHOTO BY EDDIE SSEJJOBA

By Eddie Ssejjoba

Uganda Martyrs University (UMU) has launched the Uganda Martyrs Essay competition, targeting pre-university students from East and Central Africa.

According to the university management, the competition targets students from the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA).

AMECEA is a Catholic pastoral organisation comprising eight-member conferences from eastern African countries including: Uganda, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, South Sudan, Sudan, Tanzania and Zambia.

AWARD CEREMONY

The university encouraged students from other religious beliefs to participate, saying the winners will be unveiled during this year's Uganda Martyrs' Day celebrations at the Catholic Martyrs' Shrine in Namugongo, Wakiso district.

Speaking during the launch of the competition at the university campus in Nkozi on Thursday, the deputy vice-chancellor, Dr Christopher Mukidi – who represented the vice-chancellor – urged secondary school headteachers to encourage their students to participate.

“We want the students to speak about the lives of the Uganda Martyrs and how their story has impacted them in their lives,” Mukidi said.

PRIZES

He said the winners will receive cash prizes, scholarships and plaques.

Mukidi said the essay competition was one of the ways through which the university will celebrate the martyrs.

He said the Uganda Martyrs have many virtues that they promoted that give good lessons to students, including promoting courage and patience among young people.

“When a student does research on a particular martyr, he or she is able to pick some lessons, which they can apply in their daily life like the virtue of patience.

“With the research, our young people learn from the Uganda Martyrs the ability to endure suffering, frustration or delay with a calm, composed spirit, rather than reacting with anger or despair. We also know that students often face a lot of challenges and hardships throughout their school life, but what they learn from the martyrs can help them go through these challenges,” Mukidi said.

The competition, Mukidi



UMU deputy vice-chancellor Dr Mukidi appends his signature to the launch pad for the competition, flanked by the Rev. Fr. Safari (left) and other officials, at the university's campus in Nkozi on Thursday

ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Christine Nakyejwe, a member of the essay examination team, said they had formed a strong group that scrutinises all the applications.

The essay launch was attended by Isaac Mondecee, one of the past winners who got a scholarship to study law at UMU Nkozi campus.

“I was in Senior Five at Jinja College when I applied and won. I got the cash prize, but I was not sure about the scholarship until I came here and I was admitted,” Mondecee said.

said, was conceived in 2022 and piloted in 2023 at institutions that are under Jinja Diocese in 2023. After a successful trial in 2023, the competition was rolled out at national level in 2024.

“It was last year that we came up with the idea of expanding it to the AMECEA countries, and received applicants from Malawi and Tanzania in addition to many from our local schools,” UMU's deputy vice-chancellor, said.

Last year's winners were Ritah Precious Asiimwe from St Charles Lwanga Secondary School (under Mityana Diocese in Uganda), Andrea Eliza from Likumi Girls Secondary School (Lilongwe Archdiocese in Malawi) and two who tied in the third position. They were Hamadt Ayoub (Muslim) from Lesso Compassion Secondary School (Fortakim Ifakara Diocese in Tanzania) and Carolyne Mukama-Talemwa from St Maria Gorreti Secondary School (Fort Portal Diocese in Uganda).

The university is also partnering with various bodies such as the Uganda Episcopal Conference, Vision Group and the Government.

PROMOTING RESEARCH

Mukidi said: “We believe that the essay competition and the awards add something

colourful to the martyrs' celebrations, including spiritual formation, youth empowerment and regional integration. We also look at Pan-African identity and solidarity as a benefit as well as educational enrichment through research.”

UMU's deputy vice-chancellor, however, said the major purpose of the competition was to promote the story of the Uganda Martyrs, given the fact that there was still scanty literature about them.

From the academic angle, Mukidi said, the university was looking forward to more academic research papers, which he said was an area that they were pursuing in the long run.

IMPACT OF THE MARTYRS

The Rev. Dr Peter Celestine Safari, a lecturer and one of the co-ordinators of the programme, said they wanted the world to know that the Uganda Martyrs impacted lives worldwide.

“Although we learn that the Uganda Martyrs were simple ordinary people, their impact on lives of people has been great, their story should go beyond the Church and celebrations to inspire others and the academic research,” Safari said.